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ABSTRACT

This paper provides descriptions of key online history resources useful to teachers, librarians, and other education professionals. Highlights include: primary sources on the Internet; archives; Online Public Access Catalogs (OPACs); the American Historical Association (AHA) Web site; state and federal government resources; business history resources; genealogy; "armchair travel" for Internet historians; Project Gutenberg online titles; oral history Web sites; history meta-sites. (AEF)

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HISTORY SOURCES ON THE INTERNET

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Imagine that a student needs help writing a research paper on village life in medieval France. How would you find historical information online describing daily life in a French village in the year 1185? What food did people eat? What clothing did they wear? What entertainments did they pursue? Where could you quickly find this information for the student?

For students of history the number of Internet resources is rapidly increasing. Whether one helping a student research daily life in a medieval village, the effects of atomic radiation at Hiroshima, or historical business data, one can locate useful information on each of these and other historical topics online. The following provides some key resources useful to teachers, librarians, and other education professionals.

As for the facts of life in 12th century France, the Internet and the library offer researchers two powerful tools. Using the popular search engine Google (http://www.google.com) simply type "daily life in a 12th century French village."[1] Scroll down the page until you see "Medieval Technology-Reading List" (http://scholar.chem.nyu.edu/~medtech/medbooks.html).[2] Professor Paul J. Gans at New York University created this bibliography for students in his course, "Medieval Technology and Everyday Life." You will find books and articles on every aspect of medieval

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life. There is also a serendipitous link to Fordham University's *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, a powerful web site that includes full-text, medieval source documents (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html).[3]

However, despite the explosion of Internet resources, teachers and students quickly realize that travel to a large public or academic/university library is often required to examine Professor Gans' reading list, as well as scholarly books in general. Does the patron need a copy of Frances and Joseph Gies' *Life in a Medieval Village*? Then he/she must either find it at an online or local bookseller, like Amazon.com (http://www.amazon.com), or locate it in a library.

PRIMARY SOURCES ON THE INTERNET

Novelist Anne Perry once researched newspaper accounts on the unseasonably hot weather during one U.S. Civil War battle. Perry described the daily activities of soldiers in the field under the unbearable heat to give readers a feeling of being witness to the event.[4] Students will want to examine not only secondary sources, such as the work of historians, but also primary sources like newspaper accounts, diaries, letters, artifacts, oral histories, and government records. Primary documents are finding their way to the Internet. Reading the letters or diaries written by ordinary people living through extraordinary times gives one a visceral sense of the period like few other resources.

ARCHIVES

Archives, like libraries, are places where public records and historical documents are housed. Many archives, such as state archives, are goldmines of primary documents and can be accessed at no cost on the Internet. Archives stored in a public or academic library may require patrons to travel to the location, but there is usually no fee to use the

archive, other than Xeroxing. Obtaining access to a private archive requires permission by the owner. Archival directories can help one locate not only primary historical resources, but also the library or institution that owns the item(s). Many college libraries will have the following useful print Archival directories: *A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States;*[5] *Directory of Archives and Manuscript Depositories in the United States*[6]; and *Guide to the National Archives of the United States*.[7] For locating British archives, an excellent source is Foster and Sheppard's *British Archives: A Guide to Archive Resources in the United Kingdom*.[8] Consult your friendly librarian for archival directories relevant to the topic.

The federal government's National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has a web site called the Archives *Library and Information Center* (http://www.nara.gov/alic/). The *Archives Library and Information Center* is NARA's recognition that their "customers no longer expect to work within the walls of the library". Consequently, NARA provides its staff and researchers worldwide with valuable links to government archives and periodicals, as well as related Internet web sites on subjects like Genealogy, the Holocaust, Vital Records, Black History, and Diplomacy, to name a few. This site is invaluable to history researchers.

Individual states are also busy placing historical records online. The Library of Virginia's (http://www.lva.lib.va.us/dlp/index.htm) Digital Library Program (DLP)[9] has over 2 million original documents, including original land records, bible records, and military lists dating from the 18th century. For writers inventing character names from the colonial period this is an invaluable resource. In fact, most states have an online presence.

Anyone can simply go to Google, or the search engine of their choice, type the state's name followed by "state archives", as in "California state archives".

THE OPAC OF OPACs

Knowing how to search a library's holdings through an Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), quickly and skillfully, is an important tool that librarians and teachers can demonstrate for students. The University of California at Berkeley has an experimental digital library called the "Berkeley Sunsite". There you will find "Libweb: Library Servers via the World Wide Web", an astonishing single web site with direct links to many public and academic library OPACs in the United States—and around the world (http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Libweb).[10] The Berkeley Sunsite is definitely worth visiting as it is on the cutting edge of digital library development. It houses an eclectic assortment of historical documents like the Jack London collection, the Emma Goldman papers, the American Heritage Project, Oral Histories Online, and even Online Course Readings for UC Berkeley Classes (http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Collections/).

Historical research may require accessing a university OPAC. Understanding how Library of Congress Subject headings function is another very useful skill worth demonstrating for students. Many students are unaware that academic libraries in the United States organize books and other materials in accordance with the Library of Congress' Subject Headings (LCSH). Most students are familiar with the Dewey Decimal Classification System typically used by their local public library. While subject classification systems were created to make it easier to access humanities collected knowledge, unfortunately, the brilliant people at the Library of Congress who create the many subject headings cannot possibly anticipate the multitude of ways people think about

a topic. Database professionals can demonstrate for users, for example, that if one types "Medieval history", the computer (the OPAC) will suggest: "USE Middle Ages - History". Sometimes one may not have great familiarity with the historical period in question. Adding the word "dictionary" (e.g. Middle Ages – History – Dictionary) to a search string can provide a resource, namely a dictionary that can help a researcher with the subjects and terminology used during that period. Advise your students to think creatively about their subject by planning ahead. Suggest they write down a few synonyms for their subject before searching an OPAC. Have them approach the subject like a reporter by identifying the who, what, where, when, and why of their subject. Teacher and students can explore the letters and numbers the Library of Congress assigns for each subject heading at the Library of Congress Classification Outline web site (http://lcweb.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/lcco/lcco.html).[11]

THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION (AHA) WEB SITE

The American Historical Association (AHA) publishes the book, *Guide to Historical Literature*—considered by many to be the Bible of historical research and a treasure chest for researchers.[12] The AHA website is also worth a visit (http://www.theaha.org). The *Guide to Historical Literature* is the decades-long work of more than 400 historians. It is an annotated bibliography of historical reference works, articles and books in virtually every area of historical scholarship. Although the last edition was published in 1995, it is difficult to imagine a single reference book with the scope of the *Guide to Historical Literature*.

While the *Guide's* coverage favors European culture, there are sections on Latin American, African, and Asian history. In addition, through a cooperative arrangement with

the Organization of American Historians (OAH), current issues of the American Historical Review and Journal of American History are available online line at the History Cooperative web site (http://www.historycooperative.org).[13]

STATE & FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Federal and state governments offer a variety of useful Internet resources. The U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) has a vast collection of inexpensive books on historical topics (http://www.gpo.gov) that can be ordered online.[14] At the homepage, in the "search" box type "history" to retrieve over 500 purchasable documents ranging from military history to the history of minorities. Select "minorities" to retrieve "Black Americans in Defense of Our Nation", a pictorial history on the contributions made by African-American citizens from the Colonial period to the Persian Gulf War—available for $22. The GPO is also a useful source for searching historical aspects of the Congressional Record and landmark Supreme Court cases.

Students may also be unaware of the resources available at the Library of Congress (LOC), which is not only the world's largest library, but also a leader in developing online collections (http://www.loc.gov). The LOC is home to more than 22 million books, as well as journals, computer files, manuscripts, cartographic materials, music, sound recordings, and visual materials in the Library's collection—some 119 million items. One can search the LOC's catalog at: http://lcweb.loc.gov/catalog/.[15]

History aficionados will find the LOC's American Memory project of interest (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html).[16] Seventy online collections tell the history of America in the pictures, maps, personal stories, and music of its citizens. *The African-American Odyssey*, for example, recounts the history of African-Americans in this country

with 397 online pamphlets from the Rare Book and Special Collections Division (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/aohome.html).[17] One will find online video of Teddy Roosevelt, collections of baseball cards, early American photography—everything to give the writer a visceral sense of America life in the 19th and early 20th century.

BUSINESS HISTORY RESOURCES

Students, particularly college students, will discover that historical information about existing companies is generally easier to find than information about extinct or very old companies. Also, it is easier to locate business information about publicly traded companies than about private firms. This is largely because publicly traded companies are required by law to file financial reports with the Securities and Exchange Commission where privately owned firms are not. Business web sites created by companies like Yahoo, Excite, Infoseek, and Microsoft provide helpful historical data about today's business environment. Yahoo's popular Finance web site (http://finance.yahoo.com/?u) provides researchers with historical data such as a company's stock performance over the past decade, financial ratios, and even aid in identifying a company's chief competitors.

A company's annual report also offers useful historical data for the researcher. *Report Gallery* is a free web site that lists more than 2,200 annual reports, including the majority of the Fortune 500 companies (http://www.reportgallery.com/). Business history researchers should appreciate *Corporate Information*, another web site with more than 15,000 company research reports and over 300,000 public and private company profiles (http://www.corporateinformation.com/). Researchers can search for companies by country, state, or industry. *Corporate Information's* web site also includes 1,700 company profiles in French and 600 in Spanish.

Historical information on old or extinct companies requires some detective work. Business, especially company information before 1980 is less likely to be found online. The Library of Congress' *Guide to Business History Resources* is a helpful web site for unearthing company history information by identifying print resources, which can be located in most academic libraries. (http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/business/guide/sharp13.html).[18]

Of course, a logical resource for business information is a business school. An excellent web site for researchers is the University of Washington meta-site, listing the web addresses of many of the top business schools across the United States (http://www.lib.washington.edu/business/abl.html). The downside to accessing a business school's website is that many of the school's online resources are restricted to use by authorized users. However, business school web sites, like UC Berkeley's (http://lib.berkeley.edu/BUSI/bbg18.html#comp) still offer a wealth of historical resources unknown to many researchers.

GENEALOGY

Resources for history research would be incomplete without discussing the importance of genealogy. Genealogy offers a glimpse into family histories. Genealogy provides student writers with invaluable information: common names, occupations, even causes of death are fuel for a writer's imagination. The progenitor of all genealogy web sites is "Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet" (http://www.cyndislist.com/)[19] with more than 63,000 hyperlinks to genealogy sites on the Internet. Cyndi's inexhaustible list even includes a helpful tutorial site that instructs beginners in the fundamentals of genealogical research. Cyndi's List has links to cities, counties, states, countries, and governments with genealogical records; there are links to family bible records in counties

across the U.S; there are links to cemeteries, funeral homes, and heraldry; there is even a link for when one has "Hit a Brick Wall".

Cyndi's link for "Diaries and Letters" and oral histories is another archival jackpot (http://www.CyndisList.com/diaries.htm).[20] Cyndi's List ***is*** a commercial web site supported by SierraHome.com and you will find advertisements for *Cyndi's List – The Book*, which can be purchased online. Also, for $69.95 (price as of 5/2/2000) SierraHome also sells a CD-Rom product with 21 cd's containing more 350 million names gathered from sources that include Ellis Island records, land records, Civil War Records, and the Social Security Index. Veterans' service records can be researched at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) (http://www.nara.gov).[21] NARA has additional resources of interest, e.g. pictorial histories, for history researchers.

ARMCHAIR TRAVEL FOR INTERNET HISTORIANS

Visiting a historical site fires the imagination and adds credibility to narrative. Student historians will probably wish to visit the places they are writing about, according to Edward Rutherford, author of the popular novel *London*.[22] Rutherford once walked around Stonehenge at night to imagine what it might have been like to live in Britain's ancient past. However, not everyone can hop on a plane to England, especially students with a limited expense account. The Internet offers history scholars on a tight budget an unusual and virtually free trip to exotic locations. Web Cams are actual video cameras set up around the world to transmit live video from famous and not-so-famous locations. The "World Map of Live Web Cabs" Internet site indulges students with a taste for armchair travel (http://dove.net.au/~punky/World.html).[23] A map of the world covered with red dots denotes the location of live video cameras around the world. One can look at what is

happening at particular location in South Africa, Israel, Hong Kong, Australia, Alaska, and a multitude of other locations. You can find a list of web sites with live web cams in Google (http://www.google.com). Simply type, "live pictures from around the world" to retrieve them.

PROJECT GUTENBERG—BOOKS ONLINE

Like Mr. Spock on the television series *Star Trek*, we may one day read all books on a hand-held, electronic device.[24] Project Gutenberg is ready to make that a reality by providing the electronic library from which to download "Etexts", or full-text books (http://promo.net/cgi-promo/pg/t9.cgi).[25] Click on the "search" to retrieve books by author, title, subject, language, or Library of Congress Subject Heading. There are classic historical texts like Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, as well as contemporary history as in William Jefferson Clinton's Inaugural Address—in all more than 200 books on history. All books can be downloaded as simple a text (.txt) or zipped file or read directly off the website. Project Gutenberg will have 10,000 titles online by end of 2001. The major limitation of Project Gutenberg is that only texts in the public domain are available.

ORAL HISTORY WEB SITES

History often begins with people telling stories about what happened to their families and to their communities. What did the local people in Gettysburg say just after the battle that raged there in July 1863? We know what Abraham Lincoln said at Gettysburg in November 1863, but did any townspeople or town historians witness the battle? (visit to following Civil War web site to find out: http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/EMS/Gettysburg/Gettysburg.html)[27]. In small towns or

villages, oral historians hold the community's collective memories. Oral historians kept the past alive by retelling (and recording) the history of their communities for succeeding generations.

Oral histories are found in university archives and special collections and now online (http://history.rutgers.edu/oralhistory/orlhom.htm).[28] The Rutgers Oral History Archives for World War 2 Web features interviews with men and women who took part in WW2. There is also a hyperlink from the Rutgers web site to other Oral History Internet sites like the Civil Rights Oral History Bibliography and the history of Labor Movement (http://history.rutgers.edu/oralhistory/links.html). Historical research on the Internet is often a serendipitous expedition from web site to another excellent resource.

HISTORY META-SITES

Students will profit from the "WWW-VL History Index Network" at the University of Kansas (http://www.ukans.edu/history//VL/index.html).[29] Created to serve the needs of professional historians, the web site's easy-to-navigate home page includes topics such as: "Research Methods and Materials" (e.g., Archives, Manuscripts, Booksellers), "Eras and Epochs" (Prehistory, Ancient Greece, et.al.), "Historical Topics" (e.g., Women's History, History of Science), and "Country and Region". Select Ireland to examine online maps, dictionaries (Gaelic), genealogies, bibliographies, journals, archives, full-text manuscripts, libraries, and universities. This web site can be used to explore many historical topics.

Yahoo is a search engine with valuable lists of national and international archives. There are links to schools like the University of Minnesota's and its James Ford Bell

Library's archive of primary historical documents of European expansion from 1400-1800. (http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/History/Archives/).[30]

Writing a report about the artist Rembrandt? Go to the "History of Art Virtual Library" web site (http://www.hart.bbk.ac.uk/virtuallibrary.html).[31] This site contains links to art collections, library directories, and art associations. The link to "Yahoo's Art History Subject Listing" identifies specific artists and their works.

The Avalon Project at Yale University Law School also deserves mentioning (http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm).[32] The Avalon Project has digitized seminal historical documents in law, politics, and economics. Many of these documents bear witness to man's duplicity, but represent watershed events in human history. Historic documents such as the Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, the Federalist Papers, and the Emancipation Proclamation are among those represented. Documents that may be difficult to locate elsewhere include Native American peace treaties and a disturbing eyewitness report on the effects of "The Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki", compiled by the U.S. government. The Avalon Project is "one-stop shop" for formal documents in humanity's historical record.

SUMMING UP

Many people assume that you can find anything you are looking for on the Internet. True, there are full-text articles from journals and magazines on every conceivable subject on the Internet. There are oral histories, archives, electronic books, and live video cams. But the Internet has its limitations for researchers in the field of history. Simply put: the vast majority of most scholarly history books must be purchased

or tracked down in a library. But take it from a librarian: it is exciting to hunt for information in a library and librarians are happy to share their knowledge.

Today publishers and libraries are experimenting with the online books and digital collections. Technology *can* protect the author's copyright through encryption devices, making it possible to sell and distribute books over the World Wide Web. Libraries are contracting with electronic vendors like NetLibrary to make textbooks available to a wider audience (http://www.netlibrary.com).[33] The future is now and promises that rapidly increasing numbers of books will be available online. Teachers, librarians, and other education professionals have a wonderful opportunity to show students the wonderful (and rapidly expanding) resources available for researching the past.

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[23] "The World Map of Live Web Cabs". <http://dove.net.au/~punky/World.html>. April 2000.
[24] Today one can actually read books on the Pocket PC. Microsoft has loaded the Pocket Pc, a Palm-pilot like device, with their eBook Reader to electronic books. A warning, though, the screen is absurdly small.
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[33] NetLibrary.com. http://www.NetLibrary.com. May 2000. NetLibray is new company with more than 10,000 ebooks (online electronic texts) primarily directed at public, academic, and special libraries. They offer institution a variety of creative purchase and rental agreements. NetLibrary is a commercial digital library and one of the first of its kind.

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